

Barbie doll: the title  
itself advocates a  
perfect physique



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The title “ Barbie Doll” suggests that the poem advocates a perfect physique; however, it is a satire concerning human’s emphasis upon physical attraction. The title generates a satirical piece through the language used in the poem. The words and phrases in the poem express how young girls are influenced to acquire a perfect body that is often unachievable. A “ Barbie Doll” is a play toy meant for young girls.

A doll is thought of as a young girl’s sweet and innocent toy that portrays a positive image, but a Barbie is a plastic doll made in the image of a conventionally attractive, slim, and shapely young woman with blonde hair, blue eyes, and fair even skin. The denotation of a doll is a child’s toy made to resemble a human being. Barbie dolls create an image that girls of all ages feel obligated to live up to. The girl in the poem is ordinary and stereotypical young teen.

The Barbie doll is a fitting toy because she is a young girl, and it is socially acceptable and expected for her to enjoy it; yet, the Barbie doll is unordinary and surprisingly perfect. “ Girlchild” (1) is presented with things such as stoves, irons and lipsticks, and she is forced into this world of perfection in which the Barbie doll would be her idol. “ Girlchild” (1) is “ healthy” (7) and “ intelligent” (7) unlike the image of the Barbie doll which is only viewed as a symbol of physical perfection. She also has a “ sexual drive and manual dexterity” (9) which are also innate abilities unseen by a Barbie doll.

Unlike the Barbie doll she is alive and a real human. Despite her positive qualities, the “ girlchild” (1) goes around apologizing because she is not beautiful and possesses a “ fat nose on thick legs” (11), something truly

negative when compared to a Barbie doll. She has to play “ coy” (12) and “ exercise” (14) for she has not been born with the beauty and physical stature of a Barbie doll, and is therefore seen as appalling. Before long, however, she “[wears] out” (15) her good nature from trying to be someone she is not.

She rids herself of her unattractive characteristics by “[cutting] off her nose and her legs” (17) and “[offering] them up” (18), therefore letting the Barbie doll image take over her entire life. The satirical aspects of the poem are apparent when she goes to this extent to obtain a flawless physique. The poem portrays the drastic and unsafe steps she goes through as humorous. When she dies, the funeral undertaker “[paints] on” (20) cosmetics as to cover up an objectionable trait that does not concur with the Barbie doll image.

He goes even further and creates a “ putty nose” (21), one that was entirely false and made only for visual purposes. He also covers her face in painted on “ cosmetics” (20). That way, at the funeral everyone could see the “ girlchild” (1) in an approving light and to the standards of the toy Barbie doll. Everyone comments on how she looks “ pretty” (23), not in a sense on entire beauty, inside and out, but of physical attraction that she did not acquire while still alive. She has been made into an image of a Barbie doll icon.

Once she attains the stereotypical “ Barbie doll” physique, they find “ consummation at last” (24), meaning that they are able to go about their lives with a sense of accomplishment for their “ girlchild” (1) is finally favorable. The “ happy ending” (25) that every woman may find within the

poem is not one of joy and satisfaction through living, but joy and satisfaction of being physically attractive. The poem concludes by implying that all women find happiness in the achievement of a “ Barbie Doll” image. The poem, “ Barbie Doll,” expresses how society coaxes young girls to strive for a perfect physique.

The connotations of the words, both positive and negative, generate a satirical poem, but the real life issues of expected body image are not very humorous. The poem shows how important the issues of physique can be. “ Barbie Doll” portrays women’s concerns in a funny way, but it is a serious real life problem. The issues of body image affect girls of all ages, but particularly young women striving to fit in, feel accepted and be seen as physically appealing. Magazines, billboards, television and all other forms of media provide an unrealistic image that many women unsuccessfully try to achieve.

The images placed before us are generally unattainable and force people to think that it is necessary to conform to the ideal body type. Not everyone is born into a body that is meant to be five foot five, size two with blonde hair, blue eyes, and physically appealing features. The images we see everyday influence girls to develop anorexia and bulimia. Studies show that approximately six percent of all young girls have an eating disorder (ANRED). These illnesses are important issues that many teens and adults deal with, as a result of trying to achieve the perfect physique.

In addition to eating disorders, “ nearly 3. 5 million cosmetic surgery procedures are performed each year” (The Hamilton Plastic Surgery Centre).

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Pressures from the media create dangerous outcomes and results. I have personally witnessed and experienced the pressures for a perfect body. Nearly everybody in my family is naturally skinny, except my little sister. Ever since she was about six years old she has always carried a little extra weight. My family members always said, " it is baby fat, she will grow out of it. " Now, at age fifteen, she still has not " grown out of it. My sister has been told to " exercise, diet, smile and wheedle" (14), but my sister already does eat a fairly healthy diet and she exercises with the swim team regularly. She "[possesses] strong arms and back" (8). My younger sister has been brought to tears over the insignificant issue of five or ten extra pounds. She is not five foot five and a size two, but my sister accepts that she is ordinary. Family members, friends, and even unfamiliar faces pressure her to watch what she eats and become more physically in shape.

Sometimes she gets upset or offended, but unlike the " girlchild" (1) in the " Barbie Doll" she is happy with the body she naturally has. In conclusion, the poem, " Barbie Doll," is a satirical piece that exemplifies how women are pressured to obtain a perfect physique and to be physically appealing. The media and everyday influences can cause girls to go to extreme measures in order to acquire the perfect look. After analyzing and critiquing the poem I feel that girls should accept their natural bodies rather than try and turn themselves into a replica of a " Barbie Doll. "